

MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE Gallery

CANVASS

Volume XVII, No. 3, May-June 2014 <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/gallery> hours: Mon. – Fri., 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM; Sat., noon – 5 PM
an institution of Mennonite Church Canada located on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS: The MHC Gallery's budget is met primarily through private, tax deductible donations. Please, help keep the gallery alive and growing. Make cheques payable to: MHC Gallery. Mail to: MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4. Credit card donations, contact Connie Wiebe at cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca. (204) 888 6781; Online at <https://mennonitechurch.ca/project/gallery>

Ray Dirks, curator, rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca

STONE, GRASS, FABRIC, CANVAS

CONTEMPORARY ART OF ZIMBABWE

May 9 – June 21, 2014

OPENING: May 9, 7:30PM

meet visiting artist Vivian Nkomo

Vivian Nkomo Ndebele BATIK ARTIST (**VOICES FROM MATOPOS**)

Rachel Nkomo Ndebele WEAVER

Collins Chitaka Shona STONE SCULPTOR

Stanley Sibanda Ndebele PAINTER

with Perlagia Mutyavaviri, Simon Chidharara and members of the Lupane Women's Co-op

brought together by Harry Wiens, with the help of Margruite Krahn

Exhibition Statement

Harry Wiens



go to the gallery webpage to see more art

I walked into the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo, turned left, saw the blue batik and my life was changed.

That was in August, 2003, and led directly to this exhibit.

Africa has been in my mind since I was a pre-teen, reading books set on that continent. Africa has been in my heart since August 1967 when I first moved there to be a teacher for two years. Since then I have made a number of trips to Africa and one of those was in 2003.

The Mennonite World Conference global assembly took place in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe in August 2003 and I was fortunate enough to attend. While there, I visited the National Gallery and still have a vivid memory of walking into the gallery, turning left to go into the gallery shop and seeing a large blue batik hanging at the opposite end of the room. That batik, with its striking central female figure, is now part of this exhibition.

I immediately set out to meet the artist who had created the batik, Vivian Nkomo, and to try to purchase it. It was easy to meet Vivian as she lived in Bulawayo at that time. It was not so easy to negotiate a purchase from the gallery because Zimbabwe was already undergoing hyper-inflation and currency upheaval. However, the purchase was made.

Since then I have returned to Zimbabwe a number of times and on each occasion have met Vivian and through her I have been introduced to other artists.

Each time I go, Vivian and I try to spend time in Mato-

pos, which is an area of fantastic and unbelievable rock formations and also an important area for pre-historic rock paintings. We have visited caves with some paintings that are still vivid after 8,000-10,000 years. Vivian's portion of the exhibit is entitled "Voices from Matopos", and you can see the influence of those rock paintings in her work. When I go into these caves and sit on a rock that has probably been little changed in 8,000 years I can say, "People sat here 8,000 years ago", but Vivian can say, "My people sat here 8,000 years ago". Matopos is a very beautiful and spiritual place.

Several years after the global assembly Vivian introduced me to Collins Chitaka, a stone sculptor. Almost all of the stone sculptures you see in the exhibit are by him, except for two sculptures by Perlagia Mutyavaviri and two sculptures by Simon Chidharara. Every trip to Zimbabwe also involves spending time with Collins and marveling at his gifts. Collins has said to me that he always speaks to the rocks before he starts working on them. He will ask questions like, "What can I do for you?" or "What is in you, that I can free?". All of the rock sculptures that you see are done with hand tools: hammers, chisels, files and sand paper.

I have not met Stanley Sibanda, the painter, but again it was through Vivian that I was introduced to his work. She suggested that I should go to his studio at the National Gallery because she thought I might like his paintings. She was right. His paintings convey Africa in motion and indeed convey part of what is for me the essence of Africa.



There are many baskets here in the exhibit, also because of Vivian. Vivian's mother, Rachel Nkomo, farms a small plot of land northwest of Bulawayo. As I had met Vivian I was able to visit Rachel Nkomo on her farm. Among other things growing on her farm are plants that provide material for basket making. Mrs. Nkomo is, in my opinion, an expert basket weaver. From the material at the exhibit on Ndebele basket weaving you will note that some of her baskets follow traditional patterns, although she herself no longer seems to know what these patterns signify. Mrs. Nkomo, together with three or four friends, made most of the baskets here. A number of the baskets also came from the Lupane Women's Co-op, about which you can get information on their website.

Youthful reading drew me to the African continent, which led me to be in Bulawayo in 2003 and in turn to Vivian Nkomo. Her friendship then led me to Collins Chitaka, Rachel Nkomo and Stanley Sibanda. Their combined talents in turn led to this exhibit.

Clearly that day in August 2003, when I turned left in the National Gallery, opened my life.

From the gallery

I installed an exhibit, *In God's Image*, at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo in July 2003. During my days spent at the gallery, I, too, noted Vivian Nkomo's batiks Harry Wiens first saw that August. I did not meet Harry then, nor Vivian.

I learned of Harry's passion for Zimbabwean art some years later during his visits to our gallery here in Winnipeg. Harry's commitment to the people he'd befriended in Zimbabwe was evident. He talked of Vivian. He talked of the sculptors he'd met and the art he had collected. He asked if we'd be interested in a Zimbabwean exhibit.

We are thankful that Harry's passion has led to this exhibition and to Vivian's being able to visit Manitoba. We are, also, thankful to Margruite Krahn, for the help she has freely offered to Harry, and to Harry's staff in Winkler who have, also, out of sight, aided in this exhibit's coming together. Mostly, we are thankful for how Zimbabwean artists will introduce us to that beautiful country, its art and its wonderful people, free of any preconceptions or stereotypes we might have. *Ray Dirks*

Proposals?

Artists, please, submit your proposals to us! The gallery hosts exhibits in approximate two month blocks throughout the year.

Mailing list

To receive **CANVASS**s, invitations to all exhibitions and other gallery updates contact Connie Wiebe, cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca.

Contact

Ray Dirks, MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB Canada R3P 0M4. Ph: (204) 888-6781. E-mail: rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca

Thanks

To all who make donations, large and small, we thank you for helping keep the gallery alive and relevant.

Canvass

Opening: Friday, May 9, 7:30PM

Meet exhibition organizer Harry Wiens and welcome artist Vivian Nkomo to Manitoba.

Exhibition tour and art demonstration with Vivian Nkomo

Tuesday, May 20, 7:30PM in the gallery

Suggested donation of \$10.00

out of the gallery

Batik making with Vivian Nkomo

Workshop: Saturday, May 24th, 10:00AM-4:00PM

Place: Krahn Barn in Neuberghthal (5 miles southeast of Altona, off Hwy 421)

Cost: \$125.00 (includes lunch with bread baked in the Russian Bake Oven)

Contact: Margruite Krahn, margruitekrahn@gmail.com or 204-324-1612

space is limited, maximum 10 participants

Mailing list: We have two mailing lists — by post and via e-mail. Recently, postage rates increased substantially. If you are on our postal mailing list and can switch to e-mail, we would appreciate the change. Contact Connie Wiebe at cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca, give her your name and address to drop from the postal list and give her your e-mail address for the electronic list. If you prefer to stay on the postal list, by all means, stay and we'll keep sending you the CANVASS newsletter by mail.

Facebook: The gallery is slowly climbing into the 21st Century. We finally have an active Facebook page. Please, go to it and "like us". <https://www.facebook.com/mhcgallerymanitoba>

Annual Fundraiser: Friday, October 3

This year's fundraiser takes place while an exhibit featuring three artists from Chile, Colombia and originally from Argentina will be in the gallery. The event is fast paced, entertaining, informative and features great desserts. Mark your calendars and look for more information later in the summer. The MHC Gallery survives almost entirely on its supporters' donations. Donations throughout the year are, also, needed and all are tax deductible.

Next: *Moved by the Spirit*, group exhibit from Saskatchewan, and Winnipeg's Faye Hall.

Please, consider a donation

I'd like to support the MHC Gallery (PLEASE PRINT)

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Make your cheque payable to the MHC Gallery

Mail to: MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4, or contact Connie Wiebe at (204) 888 6781 or cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca to donate by credit card.

Online at <https://mennonitechurch.ca/project/gallery> **DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE**



Vivian Nkomo and Harry Wiens in the Matopos



sculptures by Collins Chitaka



Rachel Nkomo



Vivian Nkomo



batiks by Vivian Nkomo



Stanley Sibanda, *Boys with Hoops*



Stanley Sibanda, *Tribal Dance*

